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Hoeg et al.

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(54) **VARIABLE DIRECTION OF VIEW
INSTRUMENT WITH DISTAL IMAGE
SENSOR**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

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21, 2005.

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H04N 5/232 (2006.01)
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A61B 1/00 (2006.01)
A61B 1/05 (2006.01)
G02B 23/24 (2006.01)
G02B 26/08 (2006.01)
A61B 1/005 (2006.01)

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CPC **G02B 13/22** (2013.01); **A61B 1/00096**
(2013.01); **A61B 1/00183** (2013.01); **A61B**
1/05 (2013.01); **A61B 1/051** (2013.01); **G02B**
23/243 (2013.01); **G02B 23/2423** (2013.01);
G02B 26/0883 (2013.01); **A61B 1/0051**
(2013.01)

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Primary Examiner — Lin Ye

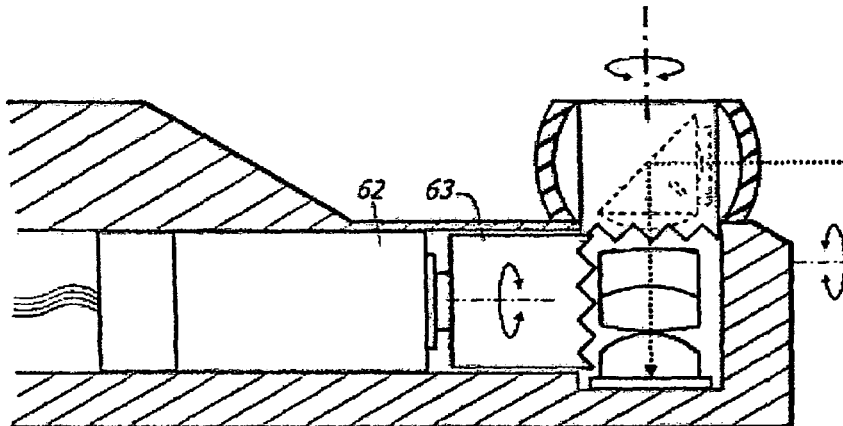
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A viewing instrument having a variable direction of view is disclosed generally comprising a shaft, a sensor mounted in the distal end of the shaft such that the image plane of the sensor is substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the shaft, and a reflecting element that rotates about an axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the shaft. In some embodiments, a negative lens is mounted adjacent the reflecting element, and in certain embodiments, a positive lens is positioned adjacent the image sensor.

14 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



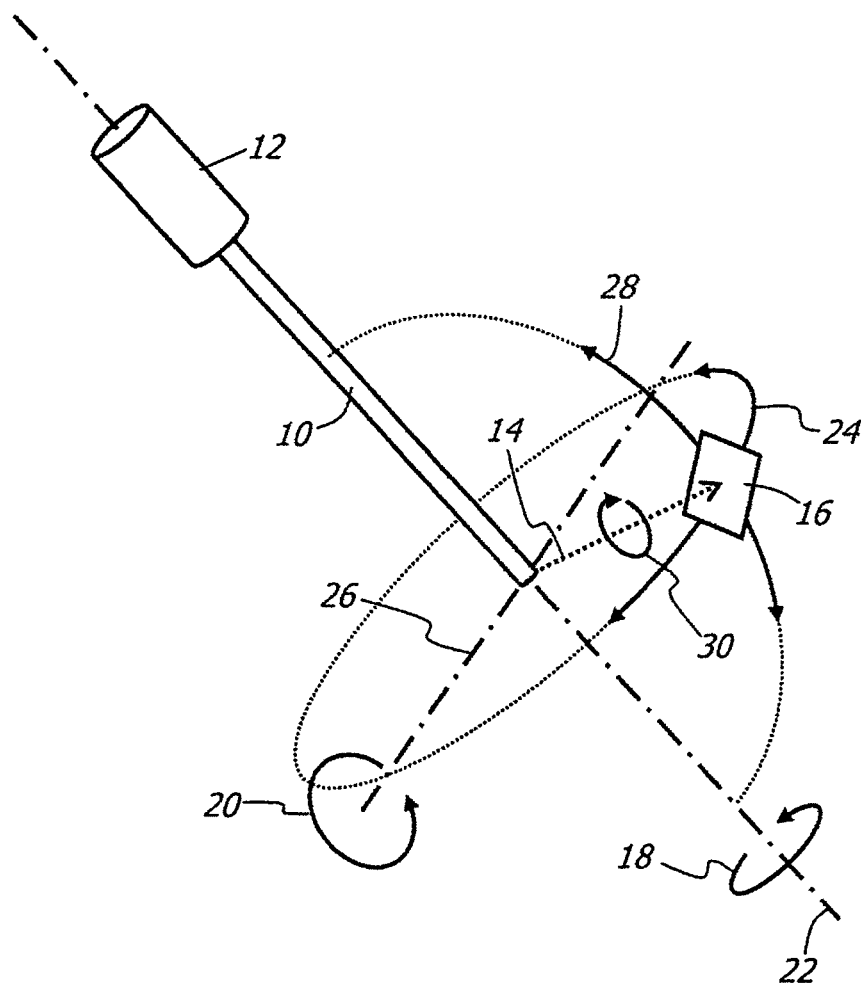


Fig. 1
(Prior Art)

Fig. 2A
(Prior Art)

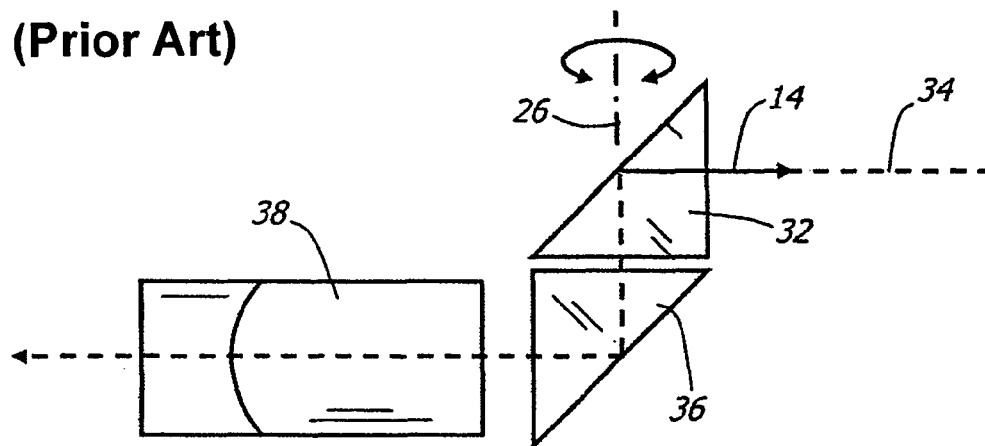
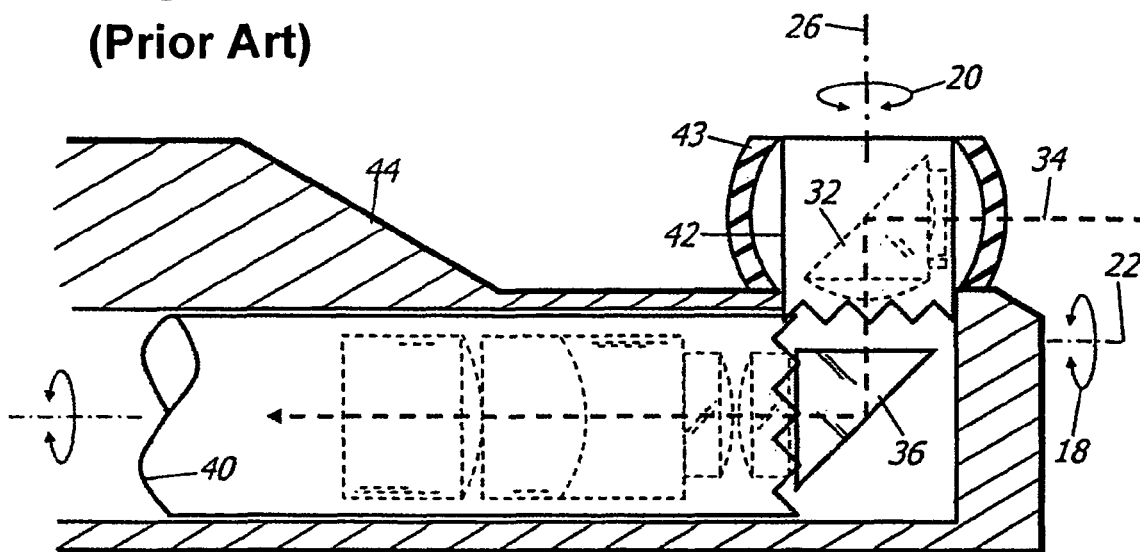
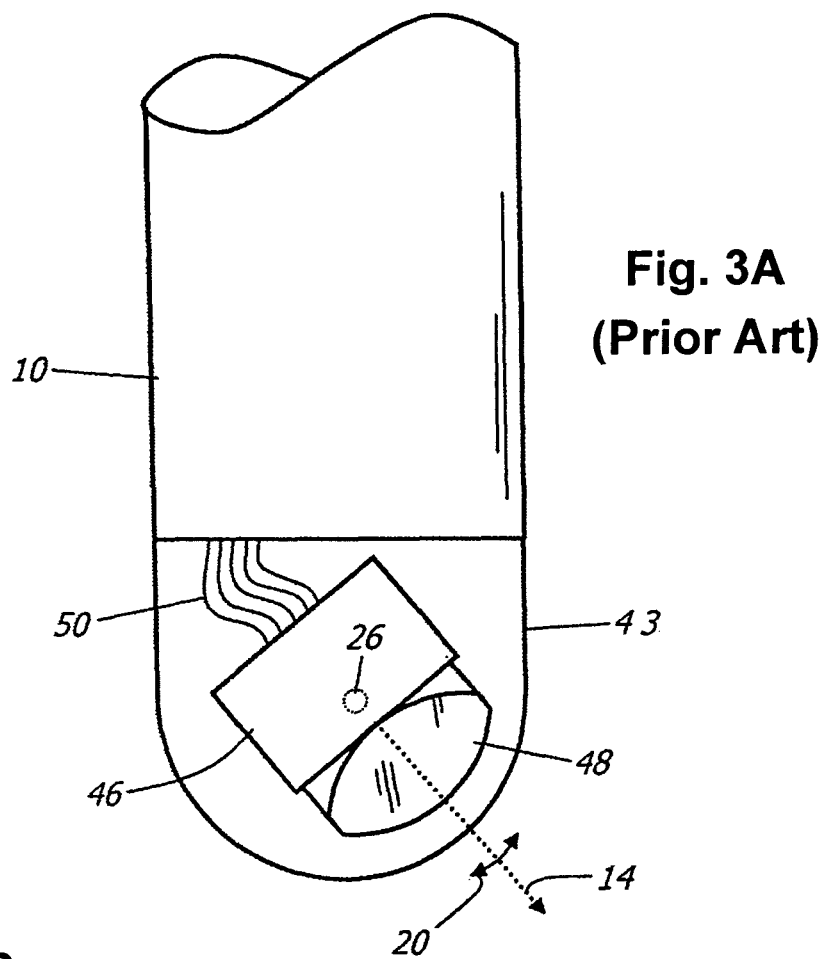


Fig. 2B
(Prior Art)





**Fig. 3B
(Prior Art)**

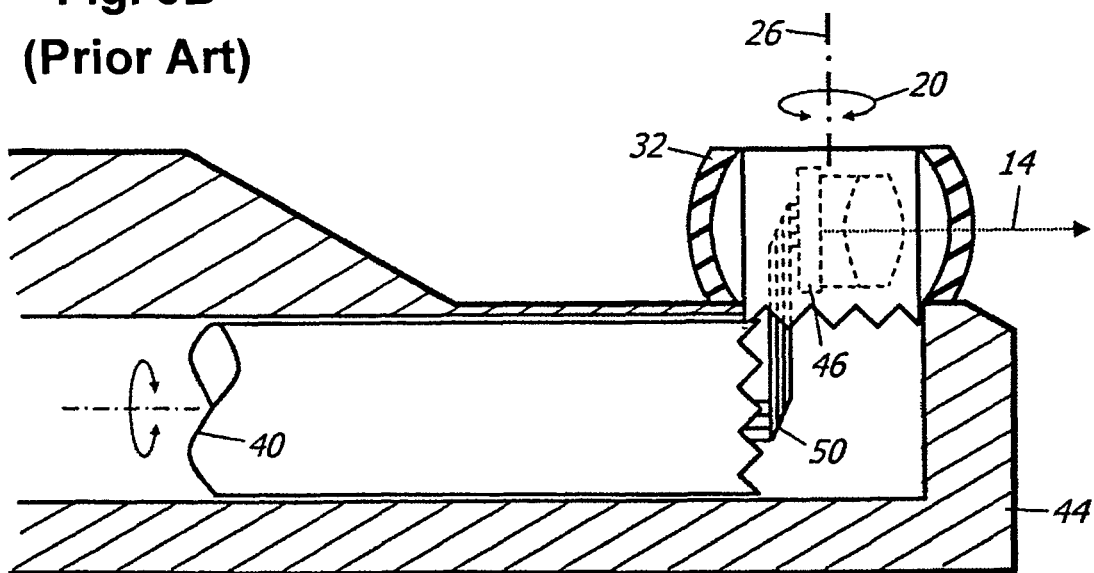
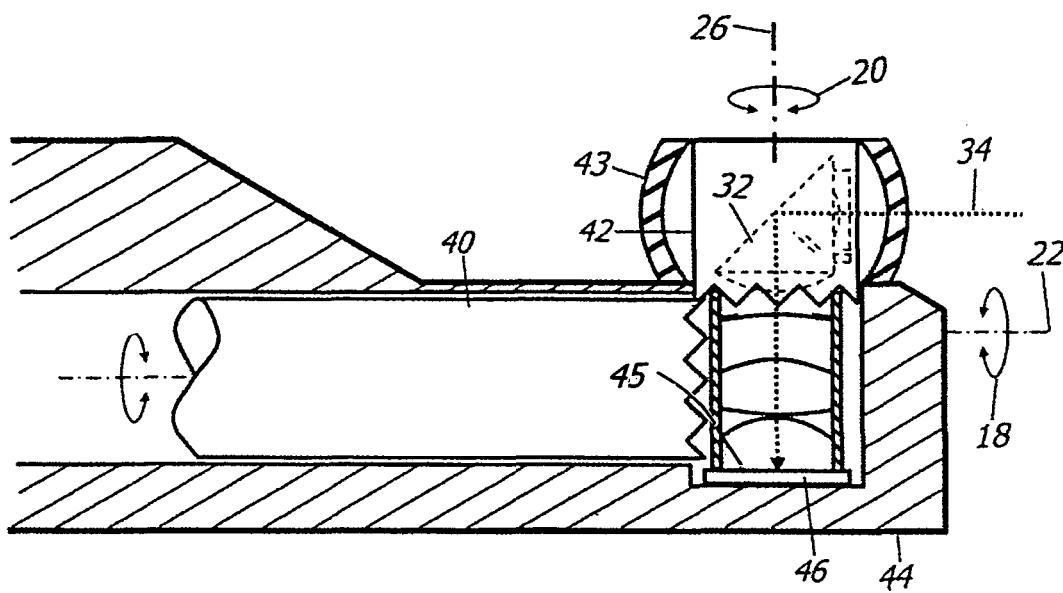


Fig. 4



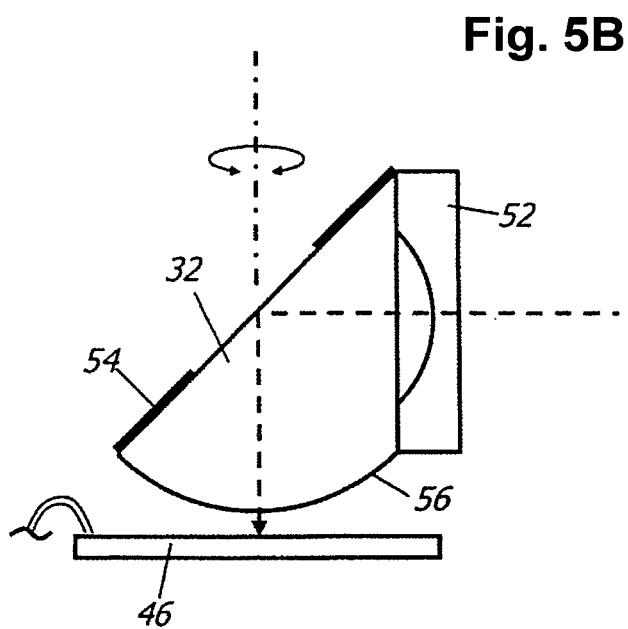
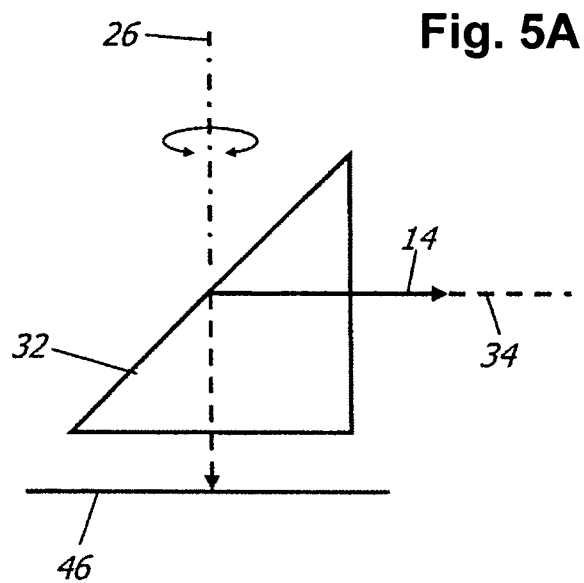


Fig. 5C

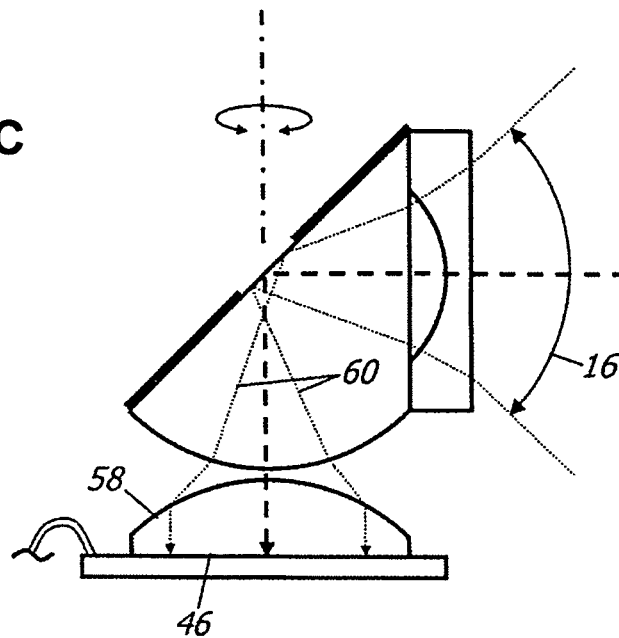


Fig. 5D

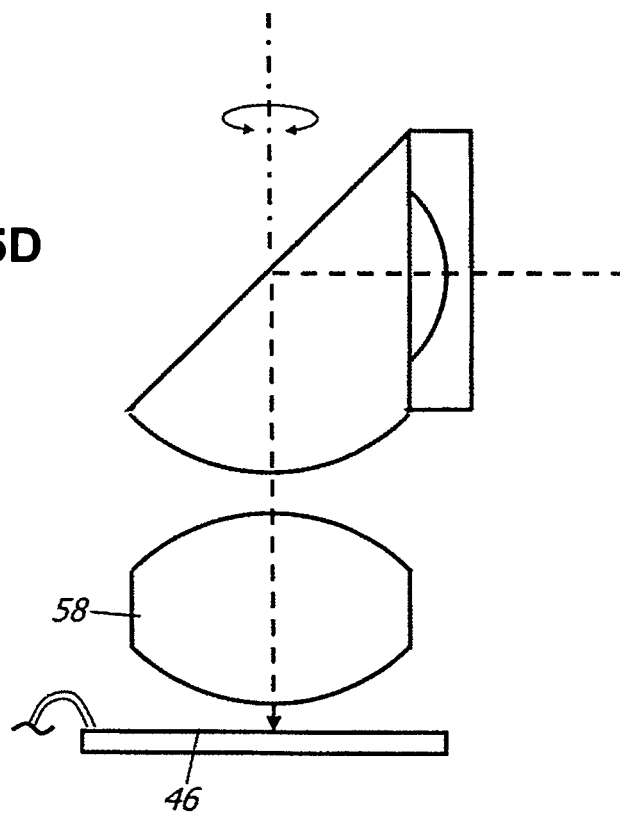


Fig. 5E

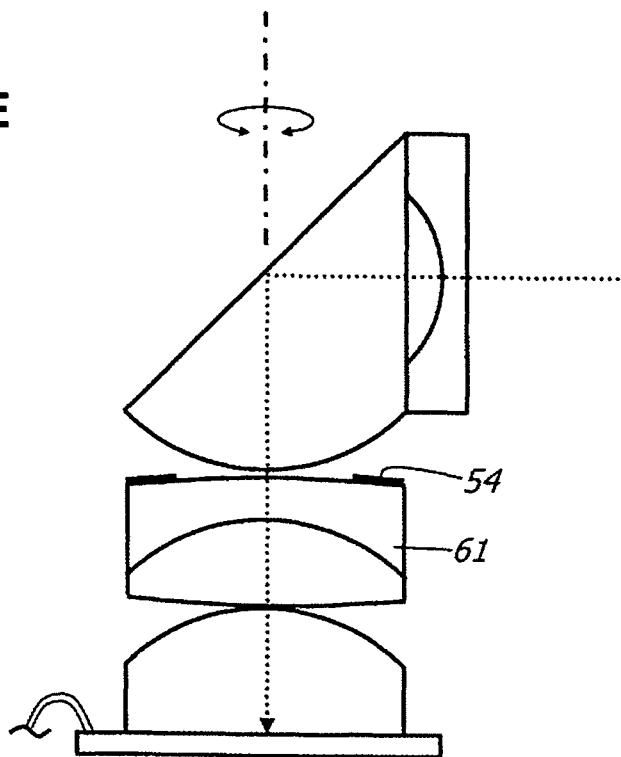


Fig. 5F

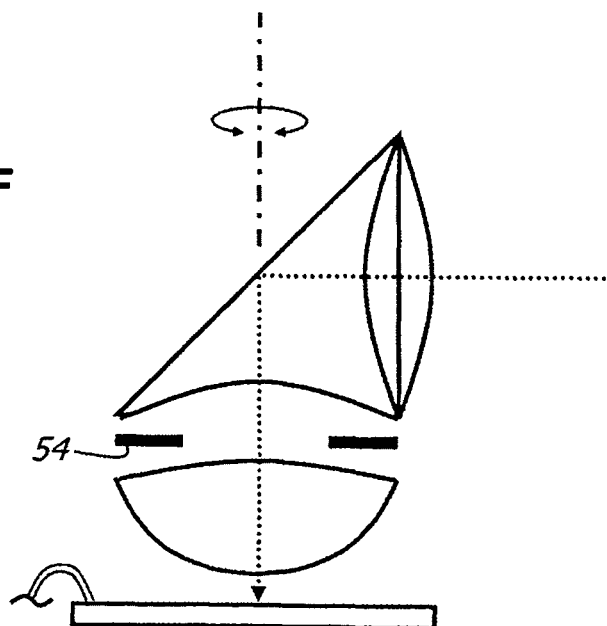


Fig. 5G

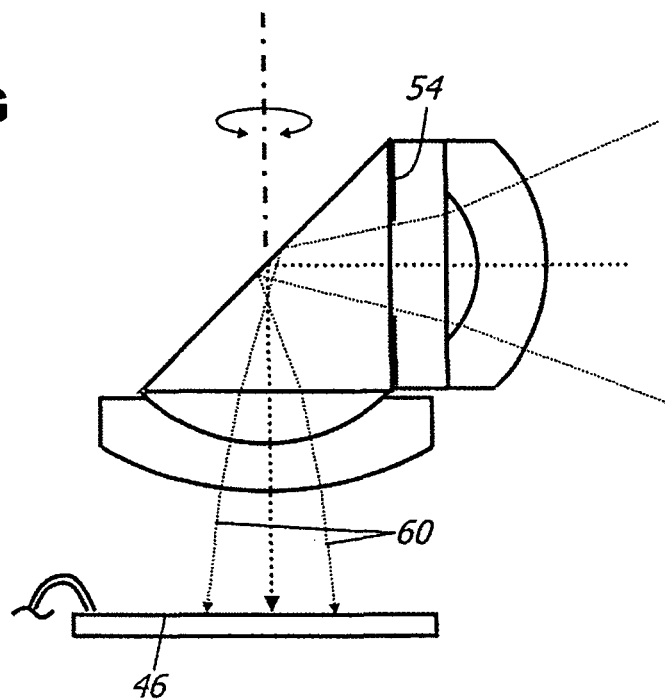


Fig. 5H

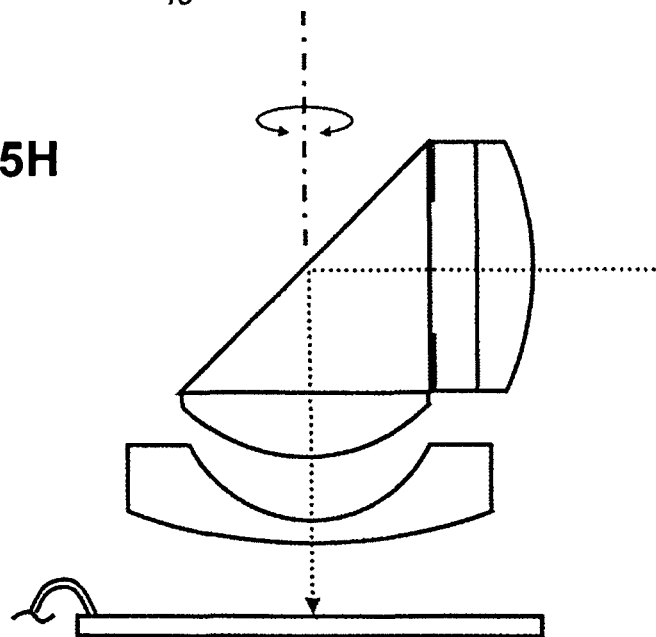
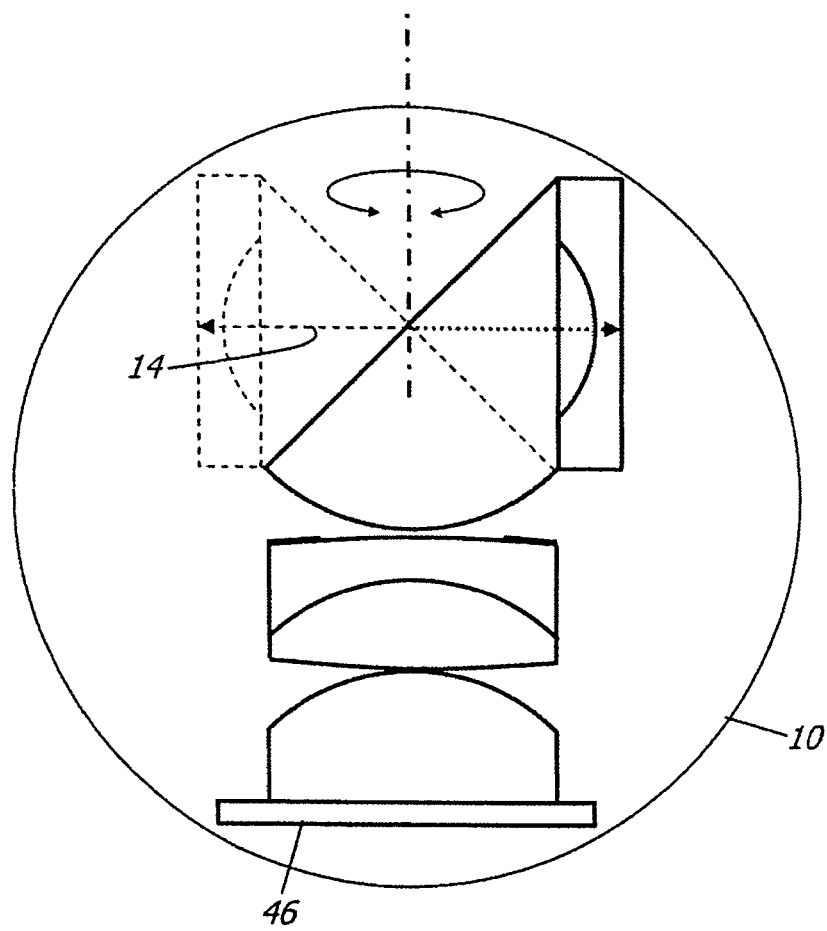


Fig. 6



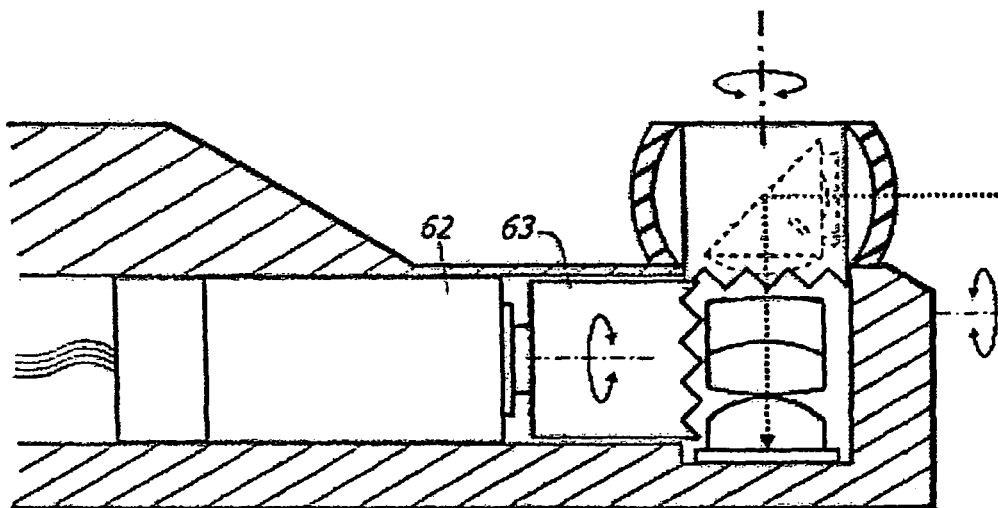


Fig. 7A

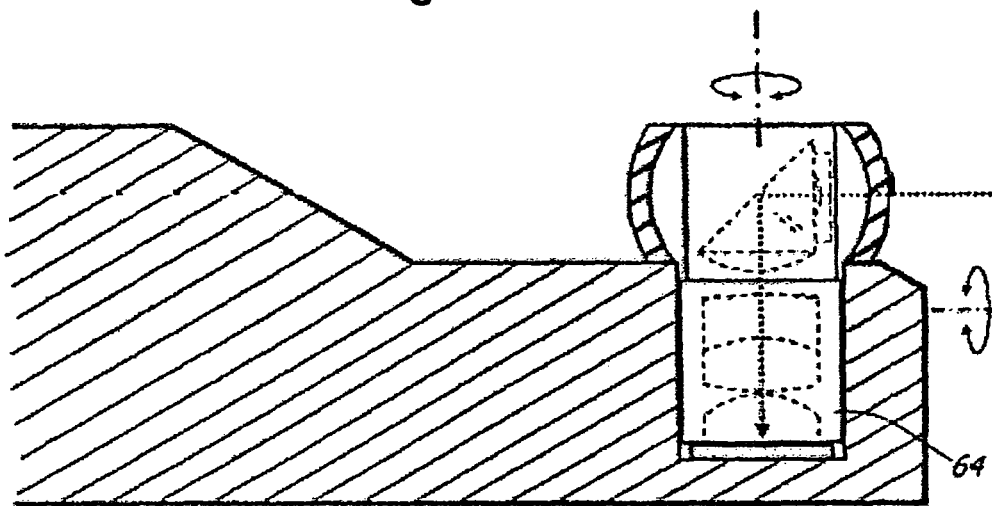


Fig. 7B

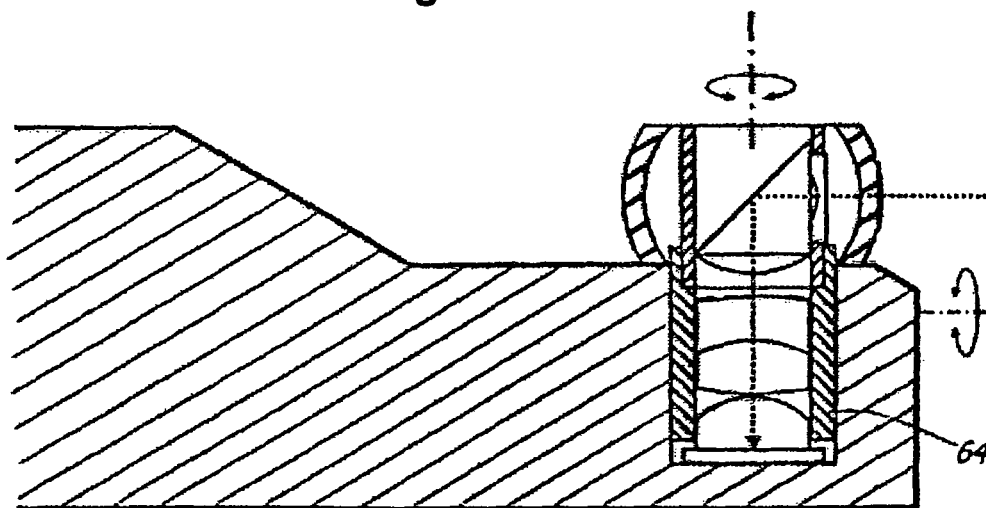


Fig. 7C

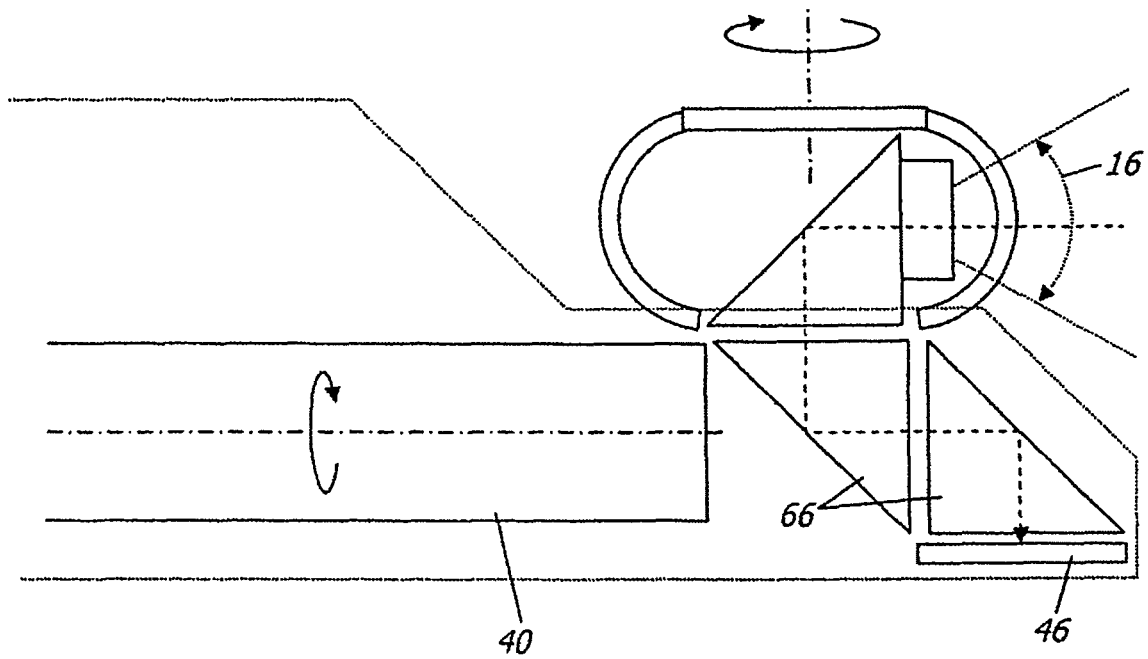


Fig. 8

VARIABLE DIRECTION OF VIEW INSTRUMENT WITH DISTAL IMAGE SENSOR

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This patent application claims the benefit of, under Title 35, United States Code, Section 119(e), U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/646,203, filed Jan. 21, 2005.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an apparatus for obtaining wide angles of view in small areas, such as a surgical site in a patient's body. More specifically, the invention relates to a viewing instrument, such as an endoscope, with a variable direction of view and a sensor in its distal end.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Viewing instruments, such as endoscopes, are generally well known in the art. Generally, an endoscope is a medical device for insertion into a body passageway or cavity that enables an operator to view and/or perform certain surgical procedures at a site inside a patient's body. As is known, endoscopes may be either rigid or flexible, and generally include a long tubular member equipped with, for example, some type of system for transmitting images to the user, and in some cases, a working channel for a surgical instrument. The endoscope has a proximal end that remains external to the patient, from which the operator can view the site and/or manipulate a surgical instrument, and a distal end having an endoscope tip for insertion into the body cavity of the patient.

Traditionally, these instruments have used relay optics, such as rod lenses, fiber optic bundles, or relay lenses to transmit the images from inside the body cavity of the patient to the user's eye, located at the proximal end of the endoscope, or to a camera likewise connected to the scope for subsequent display on a monitor and/storage on an image capture device.

These traditional arrangements suffer from a number of disadvantages. First, though systems for designing, constructing, and assembling relay systems have been around for some time, these systems continue to be costly, to be time-consuming, and to demand specialized expertise. Additionally, relay systems typically employ a large number of optical components, which must be precisely fabricated and positioned in order to achieve satisfactory image quality. Finally, image degradation is inevitable with such assemblies due to the fact that the light reflecting from the viewing objects must pass through a series of optical surfaces, as back-reflection, stray light, lens surface roughness, inaccuracies in lens curvatures, and slight lens misalignments all serve to reduce image quality.

Therefore, in order to attempt to circumvent these drawbacks, various designs have been proposed. For example, it has been suggested to use an endoscope with a miniature television tube located in its distal tip, such as the design disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 2,764,149 to Sheldon. Likewise, other designs with distal imaging devices have been described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,074,306 to Kakinuma et al. and U.S. Pat. No. 4,253,447 to Moore et al. However, while such distal imager designs are effective for flexible and fixed-angle rigid endoscopes, they have, thus far, not worked well for endoscopes with a variable direction of view.

Examples of variable direction of view scopes are disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 3,856,000 to Chikama et al., U.S. Pat. No. 4,697,577 to Forkner, U.S. Pat. No. 6,371,909 to Hoeg, et al., U.S. Pat. No. 6,500,115 to Krattiger et al., and U.S. Pat. No. 6,560,013 to Ramsbottom. The operating principles of such a scope are illustrated schematically in FIG. 1. A variable direction of view endoscope includes a shaft 10 having a proximal end 12. Such an endoscope has a view vector 14 with an attendant view field 16 having at least two degrees of freedom 18, 20. The first degree of freedom 18 permits rotation of the view vector 14 about the longitudinal axis 22 of the shaft 10, which allows the view vector 14 to scan in a latitudinal direction 24. The second degree of freedom 20 permits rotation of the view vector 14 about an axis 26 perpendicular to the longitudinal axis 22, which allows the view vector 14 to scan in a longitudinal direction 28. A third degree of freedom 30 may also be available because it is usually possible to adjust the rotational orientation of the endoscopic image.

Referring to FIGS. 2A-B, the operating principles of a dual reflector variable direction of view scope are illustrated. A first prism 32 refracts incoming light along a path 34 to a second prism 36, which delivers the light to an optical relay system 38 housed by a hollow transmission shaft 40. The first prism 32 is pivotable about an axis 26 and can be actuated by the transmission shaft 40 through a gear 42 to scan in a plane normal to the page. This optical assembly is covered by a glass dome 43 and supported by a mechanical structure 44, which forms the distal portion of the endoscope.

Such scopes have been unable to employ a traditional optical relay system as efficiently as is possible due to the fact that, as illustrated, these scopes use movable reflecting/refracting elements to change the endoscopic line of sight, and therefore, require complex designs for the distal end of the endoscope such that the tip is capable of folding the optical path and accommodating a miniature transmission mechanism. As a result, less room is available for an optical relay system, the performance of which decreases as its cross-section decreases. Therefore, a variable direction of view endoscope will necessarily have an inferior image quality than a fixed-angle scope of the same diameter when employing a relay lens system.

However, as noted above, thus far, employing a distal imager in the endoscope tip (instead of using a relay system) in order to maintain good image quality has not yet been accomplished as effectively as is possible, as it has proved to be very challenging to do so while, at the same time, keeping the endoscope diameter small. Examples of such systems have been described in Hoeg, as well as, U.S. Pat. No. 5,762,603 to Thompson and U.S. Pat. No. 6,648,817 to Schara et al, which disclose variable direction of view scopes employing pivotable image sensors. However, such pan-tilt schemes are difficult to implement compactly.

A variable direction of view endoscope with a pivotable distal imager is illustrated in FIG. 3A. An electronic image sensor 46 is located at the tip of the scope shaft 10 and pivots about an axis 26. This arrangement requires too much room to be able to fit within standard diameters of a significant number of standard endoscopes because the sensor 46 requires integrated objective optics 48 and flexible cabling 50. Because the solid state imaging device requires a set of lenses between the object being viewed and the image plane of the sensor, this assembly must sweep out a large radius when pivoted, which is simply too large for many endoscopic applications. Additionally, the cabling 50 limits the available scan range. Additionally, the mechanisms required to support and

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actuate such pivotable sensors require some complexity. An alternative, similar design, illustrated in FIG. 3B, experiences these same disadvantages.

A few designs have been proposed employing a side-mounted, stationary camera in order to minimize the required space, such as those disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 4,890,159 to Ogiu, U.S. Pat. No. 5,166,787 to Irion, and U.S. Patent Application Nos. 2001/0031912 and 2002/0068853 by Adler. However, while these designs may be space-efficient, none of these devices are able to provide the same viewing versatility that is currently possible by employing a mechanism that enables a variable direction of view.

What is desired, therefore, is a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that minimizes image degradation. What is further desired is a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that can be employed in a small diameter. What is also desired is a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that maximizes the scan range of the instrument.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that does not require a relay lens assembly.

It is a further object of the present invention to provide a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that does not require a pivoting assembly that sweeps out a large radius.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that does not require cabling that restricts the scan range.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view that does not require a large number of optical components.

In order to overcome the deficiencies of the prior art and to achieve at least some of the objects and advantages listed, the invention comprises a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view, including a shaft having a distal end and a longitudinal axis, a sensor mounted in the distal end of the shaft, the sensor having an image plane substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the shaft, and a reflecting element located at the distal end of the shaft that receives incoming light and redirects the light onto the image plane of the sensor, wherein the element rotates about a rotational axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the shaft.

In some of these embodiments, the instrument further includes a negative lens located adjacent the reflecting element through which the incoming light is transmitted to the reflecting element, and a convex surface through which the redirected light is transmitted from the reflecting element onto the image plane of the sensor. In some embodiments, the convex surface is a first convex surface, and the instrument further includes a second lens located adjacent the image plane of the sensor, the second lens having a second convex surface through which the light transmitted through the first convex surface is transmitted to the image plane of the sensor. In certain embodiments, the instrument further includes an optical component located between the first convex surface and the second lens, through which the light transmitted through the first convex surface is transmitted to the second lens.

In another embodiment, the invention comprises a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view, including a shaft having a distal end and a longitudinal axis, a sensor mounted in the distal end of the shaft, the sensor having an image plane substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of

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the shaft, and a reflecting assembly located at the distal end of the shaft that receives incoming light and redirects the light onto the image plane of the sensor, wherein the assembly includes a reflecting element that rotates about a rotational axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the shaft.

In yet another embodiment, the invention comprises a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view, including a shaft having a distal end and a longitudinal axis, a sensor mounted in the distal end of the shaft, the sensor having an image plane substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the shaft, and a reflecting assembly located at the distal end of the shaft that receives incoming light and redirects the light onto the image plane of the sensor, wherein the assembly includes a reflecting element that rotates about a rotational axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the shaft.

In some of these embodiments, the scope has a distal end, and further includes an optical component located at the distal end of the scope that receives incoming light and redirects the light onto the image plane of the sensor. In some embodiments, the instrument further includes an optical component that retrofocuses the incoming light. In certain embodiments, an optical component that transmits the redirected light onto the image plane of the sensor telecentrically.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic view of the operating principle of an endoscope with a variable direction of view.

FIG. 2A is a schematic view of the optical path of a variable direction of view endoscope employing a relay lens system.

FIG. 2B is a side cross-sectional view of a variable direction of view endoscope employing a relay lens system.

FIG. 3A is a top plan view of a variable direction of view endoscope employing a pivotable distal imager.

FIG. 3B is a side cross-sectional view of a variable direction of view endoscope employing a pivotable distal imager.

FIG. 4 is a side cross-sectional view of a variable direction of view endoscope employing an image sensor in accordance with the invention.

FIGS. 5A-H are side views showing additional detail of the image sensor of the endoscope of FIG. 4.

FIG. 6 is a schematic end view of the inside of the distal end of the endoscope of FIG. 4.

FIGS. 7A-C are side cross-sectional views showing additional detail of the actuators for rotating the reflecting element of FIG. 4.

FIG. 8 is a schematic view of the endoscope of FIG. 4 employing a reflecting assembly for extending the optical path.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The basic components of one embodiment of a viewing instrument having a variable direction of view in accordance with the invention are illustrated in FIG. 4. As used in the description, the terms "top," "bottom," "above," "below," "over," "under," "above," "beneath," "on top," "underneath," "up," "down," "upper," "lower," "front," "rear," "back," "forward" and "backward" refer to the objects referenced when in the orientation illustrated in the drawings, which orientation is not necessary for achieving the objects of the invention.

The instrument includes a shaft with a distal end 44 and a longitudinal axis 22, about which the endoscope may be rotated by the user to scan along the first degree of freedom 18. An optical assembly, which includes a reflecting element

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32 for folding the optical path **34** of the assembly, as well as other optical components as further described below, is located at the shaft's distal end **44**.

The reflecting element **32** is rotatable about a rotational axis **26** substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis **22** in order to scan along the second degree of freedom **20**. The movement of the element **32** is powered by an actuator, which may, for example, include a transmission shaft **40** that drives a gear **42** in order to cause the element **32** to rotate and thereby scan in a plane normal to the rotational axis **26**. The optical assembly is covered by a glass dome **43** and is supported by the distal portion **44** of the endoscope shaft **10**. An image sensor **46** is mounted in the distal portion **44** such that the image plane **45** of the sensor **46** is substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis **22** of the shaft **10** (i.e., side-mounted).

The reflecting element **32** may comprise any component for changing the optical axis of the optical train, further described below, in order to redirect the incoming light onto the image plane **45** of the sensor **46**, such as, for example, a right-angled prism, as is illustrated in FIG. 5A. By employing an arrangement for folding the optical path in this way, the radius that must be swept out during rotation of the instrument's view vector **14** is reduced, as is more clearly illustrated in FIG. 6, showing an example objective-sensor assembly within the diameter of the scope shaft **10**. Moreover, by allowing the imager **46** to remain stationary, problems associated with the flexing and/or rotating of electrical connections are also avoided.

In order to properly implement this path-folding arrangement such that good image quality is maintained, the optical assembly may include various optical components. Referring to FIG. 5B, a negative lens **52**, such as a plano-concave lens, is mounted adjacent the reflecting element **32**. The lens **52** has an optical axis substantially perpendicular to the rotational axis of the reflecting element **32**, and receives the incoming light and transmits it to the element **32**, thereby retrofocusing the incoming light. The light is redirected through a convex surface **56**, which may be an integral part of the element **32** or may, for example, be part of a separate plano-convex lens. An aperture stop **54** for limiting the diameter of the light is also provided, which may be placed towards the front or back of the lens train, depending on the types of glass and the particular lens curvatures used.

Referring to FIG. 5C, a second, positive lens **58** is located adjacent the sensor **46** and has an optical axis substantially perpendicular to the optical axis of the negative lens **52**. The positive lens **58** receives the redirected light from the convex surface of the element **32** and transmits it to the image plane **45**. The positive lens **58** may comprise, for example, a plano-convex lens, providing a second convex surface through which the light travels prior to reaching the sensor **46**, transmitting the redirected light onto the image plane **45** telecentrically. Other positive lenses may be used, such as, for example, a double-convex lens as illustrated in FIG. 5D. As a result of such arrangements, the optical assembly provides a wide field of view **16** as well as telecentricity of the delimited chief rays **60** at the image plane **45**.

Referring to FIG. 5E, in some advantageous embodiments, an additional optical component **61** is located between the convex surface **56** and the second lens **58**. For example, as illustrated, an achromatic doublet may be provided for color correction. Another example of the lens curvatures that may be employed is illustrated in FIG. 5F. Moreover, other arrangements are possible, such as the symmetric objective systems illustrated in FIG. 5G-H. In such arrangements, the incident and exiting light cones are more similar than in the optical assemblies described above. As shown in FIG. 5G, the

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chief rays **60** are not telecentric when arriving at the sensor plane **46**, which is acceptable for certain types of sensors, and such arrangements may be particularly useful for certain applications because they are very compact.

As shown in FIGS. 7A-C, other actuators for driving the rotation of the reflecting element **32** may also be employed. For example, as shown in FIG. 7A, in some embodiments, a distal motor **62** with a drive gear **63** is implemented. Alternatively, as illustrated in FIGS. 7B-C, a hollow-shaft direct drive motor **64** may be provided, which rotates the reflecting element **32** directly.

In certain embodiments, a reflecting assembly is provided that folds the optical path several times. As discussed above, a significant challenge for employing distal imagers is the reduced path length. Because the sensor **46** must be close to the very tip of the shaft **10** in order to not obstruct the actuator that rotates the element **32**, the light's path from the point of entry into the scope to the sensor **46** is short. Typically, the angle of incidence onto an image sensor should be less than 15 degrees. However, it is difficult to convert a wide view field to a small angle of incidence over such a short distance. Accordingly, in certain advantageous embodiments, the optical path is extended by providing a reflecting assembly that folds the optical path more than once.

As shown in FIG. 8, two additional prisms **66** are employed to fold the optical path two additional times, thereby providing approximately 30% more path length while simultaneously keeping these optics and the sensor **46** out of the way of the transmission shaft **40**. This type of arrangement allows the chief rays to be bent more gradually over a greater distance.

It should be understood that the foregoing is illustrative and not limiting, and that obvious modifications may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. Accordingly, reference should be made primarily to the accompanying claims, rather than the foregoing specification, to determine the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A viewing instrument having a variable direction of view, comprising:

an endoscopic device comprising;

a shaft having a distal end and a longitudinal axis;

a sensor mounted in the distal end of said shaft, said sensor having an image plane substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of said shaft; and

a reflecting assembly for reducing the angle of incidence of incoming light onto the image plane of the sensor by increasing the path length travelled by the incoming light, comprising:

a first reflecting element boated at the distal end of said shaft that receives incoming light and redirects the light in a direction generally perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of said shaft and wherein said element rotates about a rotational axis substantially perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of said shaft;

a second reflecting element that receives the light redirected by said first reflecting element and redirects the light in a direction generally parallel to the longitudinal axis of said shaft and toward the distal end of said shaft; and

a third reflecting element that receives the light redirected by said second reflecting element and redirects the light onto the image plane of said sensor.

2. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein the reflecting element comprises a right-angled prism.

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3. The viewing instrument of claim 1, further comprising:
a negative lens located adjacent said reflecting element
through which the incoming light is transmitted to said
reflecting element.

4. The viewing instrument of claim 3, wherein said nega- 5
tive lens has an optical axis substantially perpendicular to said
rotational axis.

5. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein in reflective
element includes an aperture stop.

6. The viewing instrument of claim 1, further comprising 10
an actuator mounted in said shaft for rotating said reflecting
element about said rotational axis.

7. The viewing instrument of claim 6, wherein said actuator
comprises a drive shaft that rotates about said longitudinal 15
axis, further comprising a gear driven by said rotating drive
shaft and connected to said reflecting element.

8. The viewing instrument of claim 6, wherein said actuator
comprises a motor arranged in said shaft and a drive gear 20
rotated about said longitudinal axis by said motor, further
comprising a second gear driven by said drive gear and
coupled to said reflecting element.

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9. The viewing instrument of claim 6, wherein said actuator
comprises a hollow shaft motor that rotates about said rota-
tional axis and is coupled to said reflecting element.

10. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein said shaft
comprises an endoscope shaft.

11. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein said first,
second, and third reflecting elements each comprise a right-
angled prism.

12. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein said sec-
ond reflecting element and said third reflecting element are
arranged so that the path length traveled by the incoming light
is approximately 30% more than if the incoming light were
redirected from the first reflecting element directly to the
image plane of said sensor.

13. The viewing instrument of claim 1, wherein said first,
second, and third reflecting elements are arranged so that the
angle of incidence of incoming light onto the image plane of
the sensor is less than 15 degrees.

14. The viewing instrument of claim 6, wherein said sec-
ond reflecting element is disposed between said actuator and
said sensor in said shaft.

* * * * *